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Our Farmers' Union Page

Devoted to Organization, Cooperation and Marketing

Contributing Editors: J. Z. GREEN, Organizer-Lecturer North Carolina Farmers' Union
E. W. DAVIS, President South Carolina Farmers' Union
G. C. WRIGHT, Executive Committee National Farmers' Union

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AT LOCAL UNIONS

- MARCH**
- (1) What Can We Do in Coöperative Purchase of Supplies and Fertilizer This Year?
 - (2) Should We Not Arrange Now For District and County School Commencements?
- APRIL**
- (1) How Can We Develop Better Plans for Marketing Poultry, Vegetables and Fruit This Year? How Will Parcel Post Help?
 - (2) Cannot We Join Together More as Neighbors With Teams, Hands, and Machinery in Doing This Year's Farm Work?

GOOD TIME TO BUILD BETTER FOUNDATION

Organized Resident Farmers Must Get Out of Competition With Crop-lien Pauper Labor

A READER of The Progressive Farmer, who has been following closely the articles from farmers telling how they got out of debt, says he hasn't yet seen it stated in any of these get-out-of-debt stories that cotton has played an important part. Some years ago a farmer in Union County who was planting a little bigger cotton crop every year in the attempt to get out of debt, found that instead of getting out of debt his indebtedness was gradually becoming larger. He finally decided to plant for a living at home, as far as soil and climatic conditions would permit, and that included about all the food products that went on his table except sugar and coffee. He knew this fundamental economic change of methods could not put him in any worse condition even if it didn't help him. Within three years time he was out of debt.



MR. GREEN

"I don't know hardly how I got out of debt," he remarked to one of his friends, "but I know I'm out all right." If the live-at-home policy will lift a farmer out of debt, this same economic policy will keep him out of debt.

The resident farmer, who is dependent upon his own labor and the labor of his family, can't afford to speculate on cotton or tobacco with the hope of gaining enough profits to buy his living. When he does that he puts himself in direct competition with crop-lien pauper labor, which, in its last analysis, means that he is working for pauper wages in the production of a crop that is produced by the most ignorant Negro labor.

Never before in the history of Southern agriculture has there been presented a finer opportunity for the resident farmer to gradually break away from the one-crop system and substitute for it the kind of farming that requires superior intelligence and personal supervision, and thereby get out of competition with the pauper Negro labor upon which the absentee landlord must depend. If the European war continues there will probably be no market at all for cotton next fall, or if there is a market the price will be perhaps the lowest on record in the history of cotton growing. Notwithstanding this element of extreme uncertainty the absentee landlord in the Cotton Belt will have his Negro tenants to plant cotton, for they do not have the intelligence and training to handle any other kinds of crops. They will plant cotton if they know it will not bring over five cents a pound. In the east-

ern counties of North Carolina I notice that thousands of acres are being prepared for cotton by these Negro tenants, just as they have been doing heretofore, every spring.

During the months of March and April organized farmers should rise to the occasion and embrace the opportunity, by stocking half their cotton land to clovers and grasses for permanent pastures. When we arrange to reduce our "overhead" expenses by letting cows and hogs and colts gather their own crops we are laying the foundation for profitable agriculture, and by "profitable agriculture" I mean the kind that furnishes a better living on the farm. In the meetings of your local Unions that you are calling now for the purpose of discussing the coöperative purchase of commercial fertilizers, wouldn't it be putting into practice a happy idea if we should decide to appropriate a part of the fertilizer funds to the purchase of Japan clover seed, Bermuda grass, pasture mixtures, soy bean seed, velvet beans, etc., and thereby begin to grow into the livestock industry? You'll find advertisements running in The Progressive Farmer quoting prices of all kinds of seeds, but if you fail to make connection direct with the grower, you can club your orders for seeds and send to wholesale seed merchants. The most practical and profitable way to reduce your cotton acreage is to prepare a part of your cotton land for pastures or for forage crops so that you can feed more livestock next winter. Discuss these things in your local Unions. It's a good time to put into practice some very profitable cooperation in the purchase of seeds for permanent pastures and for forage crops.

Regardless of the duration of the war the resident farmer will make no mistake when he gradually substitutes livestock for cotton. He will in that way get out of competition with ignorant pauper Negro labor which goes to the support of absentee landlords and time merchants. And as we grow into the livestock industry we will raise crops that can be sown and gathered with horse power and farm machinery, while our hogs and cows and colts will still further solve the hired labor problem by gathering their own crops in pastures nine months out of the year. In order to "grow into the livestock industry," we must coöperate in the purchase of pure-bred sires and in the purchase of seeds. In this line of coöperative activity every local Union in the cotton and tobacco sections should get busy. Two or more members in each local Union should purchase at least one pure-bred sire this spring. Investments of this kind will ultimately pay the biggest dividends that it is possible to obtain by any investment that can be made by a group of organized farmers in the cotton section. It is true, there will be no immediate results, but the best results are always the cumulative kind. Attempts to get quick profits in agricul-

ture usually bring disappointments and sometimes calamity. Under the present abnormal condition attempts to get immediate profits are sure to bring unsatisfactory results.

J. Z. G.

Nash County Meeting

THE Nash County Farmers' Union will meet with the Macedonia local, near Taylor's Cross Roads, on the first Saturday in April, at 11 o'clock a.m. We expect to have a live meeting, and hope to have a full delegation from all locals.

J. C. TAYLOR, Secretary.



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